

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
BOARD
OF
BAPTIST MINISTERS.

BY JOHN MARTIN.

AM I THEREFORE BECOME YOUR ENEMY, BECAUSE I TELL
YOU THE TRUTH?

Gal. iv. 16.

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1798.

(PRICE ONE SHILLING.)



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Baptist Board is a voluntary Society of Ministers, who have agreed to meet together at the Jamaica Coffee-House, in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, on a Tuesday Evening, to talk of their own affairs, and on miscellaneous subjects. Like other voluntary Societies, they receive whom they please into their fellowship, reject whom they think proper, and exclude those members they may find it right, or convenient to expel.

But when they exercise this last degree of their power, they usually make a report of that act, not to the general Body of Dissenters, (for there is no such Body) but to the

the Body of dissenting Ministers, in and near London. These Ministers meet together whenever they think proper, at the Library in Red Cross-Street; not for devotion, nor as agreeing in any religious creed, but as Dissenters from the Church of England, and to support what they are pleased to call the dissenting interest. There are, however, both useful and reputable dissenting Ministers in London, who keep at a distance from this Body; and I hear, that what has lately happened, has made some of them more contented with their private situation.

I now refer to two recent exclusions from the Baptist Board, and to the consequence of those acts. The first of the two excluded members, is the oldest Baptist Minister of my acquaintance; and was, I believe, the oldest member of the Baptist Board. I was not present when that gentleman was excluded, nor did I soon hear of his expulsion. Of late, indeed, for the last seven years, I have very rarely met with the Brethren, at their room in Cornhill. But the next time I attended, that case was not forgotten. Mr. Booth, however, thought

thought they had done right, and they who acted with him were of the same opinion. The second excluded member, the Author of this Address, was, prior to his exclusion, the oldest Minister in that Society.

In our congregational churches, (at least in that of which I am Pastor,) no man is excluded, without being requested to attend the church-meeting, either to make his defence, or his confession, to prevent, if possible, that painful decision. But I, who have been a member of the Baptist Board more than twenty years, am rudely excluded from it, without previously knowing when they met for that purpose, or hearing what would be their final resolution. Mr. Button himself, Secretary of that Society, said he knew not what was intended, when I saw him lately at Islington; yet soon after, I received the following letter:

Pater-noster-Row, March 28, 1798.
SIR,

By the *desire* of my Brethren in the Ministry, I send you the inclosed Resolutions.

solutions. Under the same Cover, I also transmit, (at the request of the author,) A Letter to the Rev. John Martin; occasioned by his late publication of a Sermon, preached at Broad-Street, January 14, 1798.

I am Sir, yours, &c.

WILLIAM BUTTON.

THE INCLOSED RESOLUTIONS.

At a meeting of the Society of Calvinistic Baptist Ministers, held on Tuesday Evening, March 20, 1798, at the Jamaica Coffee-House.

A printed copy of a Sermon preached by Mr. Martin, at the Lord's Day Evening Lecture in New Broad-Street, January 14, 1798, being laid before us; and the contents of the Advertisement prefixed, being taken into consideration; it appeared that a Committee appointed by the Managers of that Lecture to wait on Mr. Martin, relative to certain expressions

sions in his Sermon, reported that he used the following :

“ Perhaps some of you may say, I fear the
 “ French will come. Well, what if they do?
 “ what then? If Christ is your life, what have
 “ you to fear? You will say, some of your de-
 “ nomination will join them. I believe they
 “ will. Baptized Infidels---worse for mend-
 “ ing, &c. Perhaps you will say, some of the
 “ Pædobaptists will join them, I believe they
 “ will.”

And it appearing from Mr. Martin's own declaration, in the printed Address to the Managers, that they had not *over-charged* his meaning; the following Resolutions were moved and seconded :

1. That to the best of our knowledge, and belief, the representation Mr. Martin has given of the Dissenters, does not apply to any individual, in any of our protestant dissenting churches.

Re.

Resolved unanimously.

2. That Mr. Martin's representation, not appearing to be founded in fact, is considered by us as highly calumnious.

Resolved nem. con.

One only of the Brethren being neuter.

3. That Mr. Martin be therefore, no longer a member of this Society.

Resolved nem. con.

One only of the Brethren being neuter.

Such were the resolutions I received from Mr. Button: but as he did not say who were present when they passed, I wrote to him thus:

April 3, 1798.

DEAR SIR,

I request you would inform me who were the Ministers that voted against me,

me, March the 20th, at the Jamaica Coffee-House; and who was the Minister that was *neuter*. Your friendly answer is expected in a few days, by your humble servant,

JOHN MARTIN.

THE ANSWER.

Pater-noster-Row, April 9, 1798.
SIR,

The resolutions of the Ministers at the Jamaica Coffee-House, which I forwarded to you, were sent by me in my official capacity, as Secretary to the Society. In so doing, I have fulfilled my appointment. You will therefore not consider it as an unfriendly answer to your request, made to me as an individual, when I inform you that I cannot with propriety comply with it.

I am, your's, &c.

WILLIAM BUTTON.

I THUS REPLIED.

April 12, 1798.

DEAR SIR,

I now address you in your official capacity, as Secretary to the Baptist Board of Ministers, and humbly request that as such, you will give my love to that Society, and say, I hope they will permit you to answer in the frankest manner, my former Letter.

I am, dear Sir,
your obliged,
and humble servant,
JOHN MARTIN.

THE FINAL ANSWER.

Pater-noster-Row, April 26, 1798.

DEAR SIR,

I laid your Letter before the Brethren, at their meeting on Tuesday Evening, the 24th instant: when after due deliberation, it was resolved, That your request is such, as renders a compliance with it both unprecedented and improper. I was however, directed

to

to inform you, that no resolution reflecting upon your conduct has been passed, without previously desiring each member of the Society to attend on special business; and that, when the resolutions of the 20th of March last, of which you have a copy, were confirmed, three fourths of the members were present.

I remain, dear Sir,
with suitable respect,
Yours,

WILLIAM BUTTON.

In our Courts of Justice, the names of the Judges and Jurymen are never concealed: but some people who talk loudly of benevolence, are willing to do that as a body, which as individuals, they think it improper to avow.

Mr. BUTTON it seems, was directed to inform me, that no resolution reflecting on my conduct had been passed, without previously desiring each member of the Society to attend on special business. But the reader sees, I was not previously desired to attend; and he now

learns, that the *special* business was to *reflect* on my conduct.

In the following Address, the reader has my opinion of the resolutions I received from Mr. Button, and of the *anonymous* Letter sent me with those resolutions. He will also find in it some thoughts of Dissenters, and of the dissenting interest, not unworthy his notice.

I have long revered moderate and firm Dissenters, and observed in others, the excess of non-conformity. I wish to guard ingenuous minds against that *excess*, and to promote that kind of moderation and firmness which I approve. Such is the *design* of this publication; and of that intention I am not ashamed.

AN

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

AS you did not mean your late resolutions should meet with my approbation, you will not be surprized to hear I was not pleased with their contents.

The ground of your censure, is not what I delivered at Broad-Street, nor is it any part of my printed Sermon, but words *said* to be mine, by a Committee resolved to treat me roughly. This is unfair; but you say, it appears from my own declaration, that the Managers have not *over-charged* my meaning. If, however, they

they have used words to express it, (or to say what they thought to be my meaning,) I did not use, was it candid to prefer their words to my own ?

The language of your first resolution, I read with wonder. That not **ANY** individual in **ANY** of our protestant dissenting Churches would join the French, if they had an opportunity, is incredible. But you wished to deal severely with me, and were obliged to hazard your own reputation to injure mine.

The learned gentleman who has reviewed my Sermon, in the Gospel Magazine, widely differs from your opinion. Having quoted these words. “ I fear, yea I believe, were the “ French to come, and likely to prevail, that “ some, if not many, both Baptists, Pædobap-“ tists, and others, would join them.” He says, “ If this asseveration meant only to cen-“ sure the conduct of a *few* individuals, it was “ scarce worth Mr. Martin’s while to step *out of* “ *his way* to notice such despicable insignifi-“ cance; for there are, and always have been, “ in

“ in *every* denomination of Christians, persons
“ of that description.”

The concluding remark expresses, I believe,
the public opinion.

But gentlemen you say, that to the best of
your knowledge and belief, there is not one of
that description, no, not *one*, in *any* of our
protestant dissenting churches!! I will not esti-
mate your worth by your weakness; but I will
venture to say, If you had not better know-
ledge and belief on some subjects than on this,
neither your sagacity, nor sincerity, would be
applauded.

You may remind me, that this Reviewer has
said, “ But, if Mr. Martin meant to cast a re-
“ flection upon a whole Body of Men, we
“ scruple not to say, it is unbecoming of the
“ character of a gentleman, a scholar, or a
“ christian divine.”

You have a right to remind me of this re-
mark. But what could induce that gentleman
to

to make it? Had he not these words of mine before him? " I thought almost every body believed, there were at present, weak and bad men of every denomination; and that most people supposed, there was also a decided majority in each, that would watch the motions, and prevent, as far as possible, the ill effect of their misbehaviour."

I wish, gentlemen, my next remark could be made in better language than is at present at my command. Forgive me, if I say, that when you passed your first resolution, some of you held up your hands dishonourably. For, when two of your Society called on me in Russel-Street, they heard what will by no means agree with that resolution; and they heard this from a man of whose integrity they professed to have no doubt.

Your second resolution naturally followed the first; and must stand, or fall with it; but your third, is expressed with a kind of severity, unknown, I hope, in our congregational churches. When any person is excluded from them,

them, I apprehend, he is only excluded till it may appear to be their duty to remove the censure; and, I believe, something to that purpose is always mentioned: whereas, your unrelenting language is, "That Mr. Martin be therefore, NO LONGER a member of this Society."

Can you review these resolutions and be pleased with their contents? Yes, as a Society you can; but as *individuals*, you seem to be ashamed. The last Letter which I received from your Secretary, naturally leads me to that opinion.

So much, gentlemen, for your resolutions. I now intend to take some notice of the *anonymous* Letter which I received with them: not that I am pledged to do this; but because I am told, that Letter meets with your approbation.

From the *motto* prefixed to that Letter, the writer would insinuate, I was his equal, his guide, and his acquaintance. If ever I was his equal, I seem to have lost that honour: and if ever I was his guide, of that I cannot glory:

so you may inform him, I am now willing to drop his acquaintance.

He supposes I was guilty of a manifest contradiction in my behaviour to Mr. Booth, on January 24. (p. 4.)

But will Mr. Booth assert, that I behaved very friendly to him on that day? I apprehend he imagined much more to be his due than I was disposed to grant; a temper, I fear, too common with most of us on various occasions. In reference to his serious prayer, I might call him our venerable friend; and I have no objection to call him so still; but there are cases in which I would not altogether rely on his friendship.

If I have been guilty of manifest contradiction in any part of my behaviour to Mr. Booth, what must this gentlemen think of his own behaviour? In writing to me, after several severe charges, (unfounded as severe,) he says, I nevertheless consider you to be a *good*—though a *mistaken* man. In the same Letter, after

after saying, As I have long entertained an esteem for you, I shall offer you my remarks with freedom, though with proper deference to those traits in your character, which I may *still* think deserving of respect. (p. 3, 4.) After saying all this, in the appearance of friendship, he could not conclude the same Letter, without calling me a **CALUMNIATOR**, and wishing I may be subject to that **CONTEMPT**, which he scruples not to say I have deserved. (p. 23.)

As I know not this gentleman's name, I will call him our author: and you must admit, he is as much your's as mine.---His plea for being *anonymous* is this; My name, says he, will not alter facts; nor is it of any consequence to the public that the writer should be known. (p. 4.) The first of these assertions is self evident; and the second, the public will readily believe.

He says, Mr. Booth only evinced his disapprobation of my conduct, on the 24th. of January, by omitting to take any notice of me. (p. 6.)

But does this account agree with Mr. Booth's impatient and uncivil behaviour that day at dinner? and, if he is a character that needs no panegyric, why is our author so officious? The temper Mr. Booth then indulged, was too conspicuous to be denied; and on reflection, such, I hope, as he himself cannot approve.

I am blamed for transcribing Mr. Burton's Note word for word (p. 7.) yet some of his best friends say I did right. But if I have done wrong, are not you to blame for sending me the words of the Committee transcribed as you were pleased to transcribe them? Has our author censured you for this? Why is he so partial? Gentlemen, those words were *said* to be mine, and he, as well as you, was willing they should be placed to my account.

Our author considers literary propriety in those who conduct the Lecture in Broad-Street, as of no real importance. (p. 7, 8.)

Those good-natured gentlemen may be pleased with his opinion. But as he tells me, with sufficient

sufficient spleen, what certain Critics have said of what he calls, one of my most considerable works, I infer, they have no reason to admire his candor. Had he not thought them incapable of literary propriety, he would not have been so gentle. As to my Sermons on the Character of Christ, our author knew where to find a more just account of them. But, though he pretends to be a Calvinist, it better suited his purpose to give the opinion of a Socinian, or a Deist, on those Discourses, than the opinion of any other Reviewer. Now, let me ask, Whether I ought to be more affected with this unfair treatment, than Mr. Booth himself is supposed to be affected, by the illiberal censure he has lately met with from Mr. Peter Edwards, and other adversaries?

It is said, the Sermon I published, is *materially* different from that which I preached. (p. 9.)

Had that been my purpose, should I have owned, the Committee had not *over-charged* my meaning? But when I made that acknowledgement, what I referred to was, their leaving out the

the word **DISSENTERS**, and applying the adjective **SOME**, both to Baptists and Pædobaptists; which appeared more candid than the language of Mr. Booth's Letter.

Our author says, I did not speak *hypothetically* what has given so much offence. (p. 9, 10.)

Of this, he can only judge by report. The contrary, however, was reported to Mr. Booth. He told me, he had lately heard, what I had said at Broad-Street, was spoken *hypothetically*: and admitted, that if so, it was worthy of notice. For, said he, Were the French to come, and be likely to prevail what followed, I would rather Mr. Booth should report than me.

Our author says, It is in the recollection of many who heard me, that the terms Baptists and Pædobaptists **ONLY**, were used by me. (p. 10.)

These *many* must have uncommon memories, since the fact was, I said by mistake, Baptists and Antipædobaptists. --- He adds, the
term

term OTHERS, was not used in the pulpit, at least not in this connection.—I think it was: but if not, what I really said amounted to this, That I believed there were some in every denomination of Christians, not to be trusted in our alarming situation; the Baptists not excepted; and, supposing that any of them should join the French, I was disposed to reprove them in stronger terms than other people.

But, I am now told, it is rather my *imprudence* which is censured, than my having said any thing that is incredible.

As to the charge of imprudence, in order to judge of that, in a manner that may be impartial, and to your credit, let it be supposed, that *every* dissenting Minister in London were to say nearly the same things in his own pulpit. What, I ask, would be the consequence at HOME? Would it not soon be said, “ Though there “ may be some discontented, and disloyal peo- “ ple amongst Dissenters, yet as *all* their Mi- “ nisters are decidedly against rebellion, we have “ nothing to fear from the few who may be dis- “ affected.”

“ affected.” And, on the same supposition, What would be the consequence **ABROAD**? Were the French to hear of our unanimity in this business, and to believe the report? they would say, “ We are deceived. We have often been told, that the protestant Dissenters in England are our friends; whereas it now appears, they are our enemies.” Such, I apprehend, would be the consequence of what I have stated, both in France and in Great Britain. But if, as our author expresses it, I am *mistaken*, yet as he allows I am a *good man*, Was it right to treat me as I have been treated for that mistake?

It is said, Who that knows Mr. Martin, will for a moment suppose, he stood in any need of compulsion to urge him to publish? (p. 11.)

As if a man may not be sufficiently fond of publishing, and yet be very unwilling to publish on some particular occasion. The Sermon to which I refer, is curtailed in every part, but that which offended; not by choice, but of necessity; it was written under daily vexations not easy to bear,

bear, and in such a manner, that I never considered the composition of that Sermon to be worth your notice? What, therefore, could induce me to publish it? Was it the hope of gain? certainly not. I had previously resolved not to gain by that publication. The truth is, your resentments against me were loudly talked of, and I thought it right to let the public know wherein I had offended.

Our author says, I seem to consider, that a minister being restrained from introducing politics into the pulpit, must prevent him from discharging a very important part of his duty. He adds, On this subject, we are agreed. (p. 13.)

Will the Managers at Broad-Street, or yourselves, thank him for this concession? But, gentlemen, neither they, nor you, need be alarmed. You understand one another, and are not likely to jar on politics; and you may depend upon it, that he and I are not likely to agree in our political opinions.

He professes deeply to feel and regret, the spread of infidelity, but says, he widely differs from me on the *causes*, which have produced that baneful mental disease in a neighbouring country. (p. 14.)

That we widely differ on this subject, I admit; but if he cannot be convinced that modern infidels wage war as eagerly against genuine christianity, as against what he calls the senseless ceremonies, and superstitions of the Romish Church, I recommend to his notice, what has lately been published by Professor Robison, and by Abbé Barruel. If those respectable authors remove not his mistake, it must be deeply rooted indeed.

Let me, says our author, contrast your language with that of the Bishop of Llandaff, in his late Address to the people of Great Britain. (p. 15.)

The Bishop of Llandaff, gentlemen, not being a Dissenter, speaks handsomely of Dissenters, with propriety; but our author, who says

says he is a Dissenter, knows not how to return the compliment. He had better, therefore, let the language of the learned Prelate alone, till he can admire his candour, and copy, in one instance at least, his good example.

Our author says, it will not be denied, that there have been some, called Dissenters, that have not, in every circumstance, conducted themselves with all the prudence they ought to have done; and that my conduct furnishes an instance of the truth of this remark. (p. 16.)

This is an odd way of informing his readers, that I have a greater regard for loyalty, order, and unfeigned subordination, than he is able to endure: yet this notion, at his own expence, is gone abroad, and is likely to prevail.

Our author says, nor are the great Body of Dissenters of the present age, either *Infidels*, or *Republicans*. (p. 17.)

Is not this to say, That *some* of them are *Infidels* or *Republicans*? What if I had said so

much?—Take care, gentlemen, to whom you commit the management of your affairs.—How great, or numerous, Dissenters are, I know not; but I know they are few in number compared with the members of the Established Church. I wish, however, that the number of peaceable Dissenters may be increased, and that the contentious amongst us may be diminished.

I do not see why I should suppose Dissenters are *more* contaminated with French principles than other people: (p. 17, 18.) nor why I may not, even in a pulpit, insist on *their* failings a little more than on the failings of the Clergy. It is easy for a Clergyman to be severe on Dissenters; and had he as much wit, his words might be as keen as those of Dr. South, and Dr. Swift. It is easy for dissenting Ministers to rail against the Clergy of the Church of England, and had they the same talents, they might do it as acutely as Vincent Alsop, and Robert Robinson. But, on both sides, there are better guides to follow. I wish, therefore, none of our breaches may be made wider, and that instead of magnifying ourselves, we may honestly

re-

resolve to speak of our own affairs, with that frankness which generally accompanies real reformation.

The apostles spake very freely of errors and disorders in the churches which they had planted. What surprising things are said by them of some of their followers at Corinth, Ephesus, in the region of Galatia, at Philippi, and in other places? They never thought such freedom would destroy their fame. Whereas, (though you hear with patience, perhaps with pleasure, many things said against the Church of Rome, and the Church of England) you are alarmed if any thing seems to lessen the repute of Dissenters. I do not like such timidity. The temper of Mr. Toplady, in one instance at least, better suits with my disposition. Speaking of the dregs of Dissenters, he adds, " Let the reader observe, I say not the Dissenters, but the dregs of Dissenters; such as Deistical, Arian, Socinian, Pelagian Dissenters. Nor can the Dissenters, as a Body, be displeased at my using such a term. Every Society has its dregs.—God knows the established Church

“ Church is not without them*.” This is frank, and the more frankly we own what is amiss amongst us, the more steadfastly shall we maintain those tenets which are not to our disgrace, and vindicate that part of our conduct of which we need not be ashamed.

Having said, I do not approve of these terms, “ dissenting interest,” our author exclaims, A dissenting Minister! and yet not approving of the terms *dissenting interest*, is surely a solecism. (p. 19.)

When I consider how those words were introduced, and the manner in which they were guarded, I own, such exclamations remind me of this text: Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.—What I have further to say on the dissenting interest, shall be postponed to the latter end of this Address.

After

* Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament, in the Year 1771.

After being asked, Whether my conduct does not too much resemble his, who scatters fire brands, arrows, and death, it is said, that I have wounded the spirits of many, whose friendships were my honor, (the loss of which, it seems, I am not likely to repair.) (p. 20.)

Possibly, our author will not think my arrows are scattered at random in this reply. But should he be wounded by them, as they are not poisoned, I hope he will soon recover. As to those whose friendships were my honor, among them this gentleman seems to include his own. But what have I gained by his friendship? and what shall I lose by declining his acquaintance? Others may think it their honor to sit at his table: I never sighed for that indulgence.

He adds, in truth, Sir, you seem so much elevated by **LATE OCCURRENCES**, that you cannot distinguish between *calumny* and *faithfulness*. (p. 21.)

This,

This, and what follows, reveals more than I imagined you were yet inclined to discover. But I must not be ensnared by an *anonymous* author. When you, yourselves, choose to attack me, *openly*, on LATE OCCURRENCES, on those occurrences, I will endeavour to set some part of your moral worth in a proper light.

The motives which induced our author to publish his Letter, are less plausible than vain. (p. 21.) He seems to have taken inclination for ability, and to have thought that justice herself waited for his assistance.---His construction of what I have said of the calvinistic doctrines of my Sermon, is worthy such a writer; and as he does not wish to be undeceived, I shall leave him to enjoy his own opinion.

Our author says, After all the pains that have been taken, to spread unfounded alarms of the disaffection of Protestant Dissenters; have they not reason to apprehend, that persons in power may be led to look upon them with an eye of suspicion? (p. 22, 23.)

This

This language, though common, is improper. It is in effect saying, That we are more loyal than our superiors admit, and that they are not so well affected towards us, as is commonly believed. A learned gentleman of your acquaintance, says, " True policy---a policy perfectly " consistent with integrity and honor---requires " us to be slow in believing, and still more " slow in avowing our opinion, by any public " act, that the Chief Magistrate of the Country " regards the Body of Dissenters, as objects of " disapprobation and displeasure."*---True policy, I believe, requires something more than this: but this remark is worth your notice, and I sincerely wish it may meet with your approbation.

Our author concludes his officious Letter to me, by saying those things of Dissenters which might be read with pleasure, had he not called himself A PROTESTANT DISSENTER: (p. 23, 24.) But how far such encomiums, from such

* Letters, concerning the Regium Donum, by a Dissenter.

a Dissenter, will raise our reputation, is yet unknown.

AND NOW, gentlemen, having taken as much notice of the *anonymous* Letter, sent me by Mr. Button, as you could expect, or the author himself desire, I enter on the last part of my Address; in which, I will venture to lay before you, some of my thoughts on Dissenters, and on the dissenting interest.

The first Dissenters in this Country, were those who dissented from their Pagan Ancestors; the second, those who dissented from the Church of Rome; and the third, those who have dissented from the Church of England. I mention no more; for, whenever I glance at the rest, I see, with sorrow, men of various tempers and intentions, separated into innumerable departments, as if of dissenting, and of dissension there could be no end.

Of the first Dissenters which I have mentioned, whether in the days of St. Augustine, or at a much earlier period, all Christians speak of their

their conduct with pleasure. Of the second set of Dissenters, all, but Roman Catholics, say they did that which was lawful and right. Of the third, (as I am one of that number,) I will only say, that the law of this Country tolerates our separation, and that the powers which are, treat us with unfeigned respect.

But who can read with pleasure, what is recorded of some Dissenters, so early as in the reign of Queen Elizabeth? "About this time," it is said, "the dissenting party much increasing, " and most of the old and peaceable non-conformists being dead, or unfit for business, the " management of their affairs fell into the hands " of younger and fiercer men; who thought " their predecessors too cold on these matters; " insomuch, that honest JOHN FOX complained of the factious and turbulent spirit " which had then possessed that party, although " himself a moderate non-conformist. He " says, they despised him, because he could " not rail against Bishops and Archbishops, as " they did; but if he could be as mad as they, " they would be kinder to him. And there-

“ fore, he soberly adviseth the Governors of
 “ the Church to look well after this sort of
 “ men; for, saith he, if they prevail, it is not to
 “ be imagined what mischief and disturbance
 “ they will bring; whose hypocrisy is more
 “ subtle and pernicious, than that of the old
 “ Monks: for, under a pretence of *greater*
 “ *purity*, they will never give over, till they
 “ have brought men under a Jewish slavery.”
 (Stillingfleet, on the Unreasonableness of Se-
 paration; 2nd Edit. p. 24.)

Mr. Thomas Fuller, in his Church History, speaking of the non-conformists, in 1564, says,
 “ These in this age, were divided into two
 “ ranks. Some *mild* and *moderate*, contented
 “ only to enjoy their own consciences. Others
 “ *fierce* and *fiery*, to the disturbance of *Church*
 “ and *State*. Amongst the former, I recount
 “ the principal; Father John Fox, (for so
 “ Queen Elizabeth termed him,) summoned,
 “ as I take it, by Archbishop Parker to sub-
 “ scribe, that the general reputation of his *piety*,
 “ might give the greater countenance to *Con-*
 “ *formity*. The old man produced the New
 “ Testa-

“ Testament in Greek; to this, saith he, will I
 “ subscribe. But when a subscription to the
 “ *Canons* was required of him, he refused it,
 “ saying, I have nothing in the Church, save a
 “ Prebend at Salisbury, and much good may
 “ it do you if you will take it away from me:
 “ However such respect did the Bishops, (most
 “ of them formerly his fellow exiles,) bear to
 “ his age, parts, and pains, that he continued
 “ his place till the day of his death: who,
 “ though no *friend* to the *ceremonies*, was
 “ otherwise so devout in his carriage, that (as
 “ his nearest relation surviving hath informed
 “ me,) he never entered any *Church* without
 “ expressing solemn reverence therein.” (Fuller’s Church History, Cent. xvi. p. 76.)

Mr. Fuller further informs us, that Mr. Fox
 was privately cast out by a faction to his dis-
 grace: but was publickly brought in again by
 authority to his greater reputation. He adds,
 “ We may plainly perceive by this Letter*, how
 “ powerful the party of non-conformists was
 grown

* See his Church History, Cent. xvi. p. 106, 107.

" grown at this time, and to what violences and
 " extravagancies some went in their practices ;
 " insomuch that Dr. *Humphred*, then president
 " of *Maudlin's*, and Mr. *Fox* himself, (both
 " which scrupled subscription in some particu-
 " lars,) were deserted by them as lukewarm and
 " remiss in their cause."---And Dr. *Stillingfleet*,
 speaking of the same zealots, says of them,
 " These NEW MEN, full of bitter zeal, despised
 " the old trifling controversy about garments
 " and ceremonies ; they complained, that *all*
 " was out of order in the Church, and nothing
 " but a new and thorough reformation would
 " please them."

These notions, though now old, are I believe
 at present, pretty much applauded. But, as I
 dare not say, the Church of England, with all
 its faults, is not a Church of Christ, I am re-
 solved to dissent from it with caution, and with
 my best wishes for its real welfare.

Some may ask, Why do I dissent from the
 Church of England if I am of that opinion ?
 I answer, because I am bound to seek my own
 edification

edification and the welfare of others, as much as I can; and because I think, that both these ends may be better answered by being what I am, than by going into any other situation. I may err in forming this opinion, but such are my thoughts, and I have acted upon them. Now, allowing me the right of private judgment, *you* cannot blame me for leaving one particular Church to hold communion with another; for you encourage the practice. Dismissions are common, too common, in all our churches. Yet they who ramble most, seldom pretend to say, that the Church which they left, first, or last, was not a Church of Christ.

Were I a Churchman, I should read with attention the best, and some of the most uncivil books, I could meet with against the Church of England: and I should do this, because I believe, in every considerable body of People, there are weak and bad men, against whose influence and example, it would be my duty to be as much as possible on my guard. As a Dissenter, I have acted on the same principle, and have read with attention the best, and most uncivil

uncivil things which have been said against us. But how little does one Dissenter in seven, know what Hooker, Heylin, Stillingfleet, South, Sanderson, and a hundred more of the Clergy, have published in defence of their own faith and practice? These learned authors, have not brought me back to the Church of England; but they have made me a more decent Dissenter than I should have been, had I not read what they have written, or not regarded what they have said.

I could wish, gentlemen, that *some* Dissenters would read the three Letters written to Dr. Stillingfleet, by Monsieur le Moyne, Professor of Divinity at Leyden, Monsieur De L'Angle, preacher in the Reformed Church at Charenton, and Monsieur Claude, a celebrated Minister of the same Church. Those Letters perhaps, would moderate *their* zeal for the *excess* of non-conformity. Yet I am afraid we have *some* among us, who will not patiently sit at the feet of moderate men, either in France, or Great Britain.—One remark, however, of Monsieur Claude on the difference between Episcopal and Presbyterian

Presbyterian Government, I beg leave to mention. He says to Dr. Stillingfleet, “ The question here is not about the *Esse*, or the *bene Esse*, but only about the *melius Esse*, “ that they dispute with you.” And by taking this for granted, he argues acutely for mutual moderation.

As to what is commonly called the *dissenting interest*, I am sorry to say, that this phrase is often used in a manner I cannot approve. To hear some Dissenters continually asserting, that the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and to perceive they are as fond of it as other people, is unpleasant. To hear them incessantly pleading for heavenly tempers and spiritual dispositions, and to observe the reverse of this in their behaviour, is grievous.

You know my mind on these matters. I have said, my object is to promote the Christian interest, both among Churchmen and Dissenters; and not to be a leader of any local and independent interest, unfriendly to, or unmindful of the general welfare. Is this *your* object?

You

You would be thought well affected to the constitution of this country ; but if it " be a vital principle of the constitution, that the Church and State are intimately and inseparably united, clinging both to the other for support," (as the Lord High Chancellor of Ireland has lately asserted,) are you as respectful to that constitution as I am ? I own, there are two sorts of people, on whose loyalty in the hour of temptation, I should not think it right to depend. I mean those who think that the **P O P E** is the origin of power, and those who think that the **P E O P L E** are the source of dominion. As men, and interested men, they may submit to the Government of Great Britain ; but as opportunity occurs, their principles will often prompt them to rebel.

In these matters, I am constrained to differ from those whom, on other subjects, I most of all esteem. The celebrated John Calvin, as a learned and judicious expositor of the scriptures, I generally admire ; but, whoever fully follows his political sentiments, will, I apprehend, find himself ensnared. Hooker, Heylin, South, and others,

others, haye convinced me that even my favorite Calvin, is not always to be trusted on civil affairs: much less are some of his popular adherents. Had that great man however seen certain Lectures and Catechisms, which have been lately published in this country, they would have given him great offence; and if you, gentlemen, applaud those productions, you cannot be attached to his political sentiments. But, whatever may be your sentiments, Am I obliged to make them my own?

I am asked by our author, (whom I had almost forgotten,) Why do we separate from the hierarchy of our country? (p. 19.)

Why Dissenters at large do this, I shall not presume to say. As to myself, I have already given my reasons. It is the *melius Esse* on the whole, (excepting my worldly interest) that I regard: and acting on this principle, I believe there are many things in the Church of England, and some in the Church of Rome, from which it is not my duty to dissent.

It is said, we feel objections to the *doctrines*, or *discipline* of the Established Religion, and hence we become Dissenters. (p. 19, 20.)

To be sure, if we had no objection to any part of the doctrines or discipline of the Church of England, it would be ridiculous, under those circumstances, to dissent from it. But formerly, Dissenters had a great regard for the *doctrinal* articles of that Church: and I own, those articles are much more esteemed by me, than the jarring and erroneous sentiments of many modern non-conformists. As to the *discipline* of the Church of England, it is what might be expected in a national Church; which, in my opinion, is too loose; and ours, I apprehend, is too minute.

But whatever may be your thoughts of the Church of England, you contend for a favorite sentiment in such a manner, as gives a sensible Church-man an advantage against you in argument. You say, The inalienable right of private judgment, is the birth right of every man; that he ought to use it, and to act

accordingly. But have not Church-men the same right as amply as yourselves? Are they more willing to renounce their birth right than you? What, therefore, will be the consequence? You must either convince them they ought to submit to your decisions, or if you cannot do that, you must, I apprehend, submit to their legal resolutions: and while the laws of the State do not affect a well informed conscience, such submission is not inglorious. When they do oppress it, I still think it would become us, as Christians, not to trouble the State, but to say to our oppressors, Whether it is right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: and those who thus act and suffer, will, I believe, best promote the Christian interest.

It is said, If we become Dissenters from conviction, and not from education, or habit, we certainly become the supporters of the dissenting interest, or we have little title to the name of Dissenters. (p. 20.)

If what is called the dissenting interest, and the real interest of Dissenters, were always exactly the same thing, this reasoning would be invincible. But is it so? That I am a Dissenter by conviction, and not by education, you cannot deny. That I am a conscientious Dissenter, is perhaps, as evident in my case, as in your own; and that I dare to be what I am, however opposed, you have reason to believe.

Had I a sectarian spirit, the things I have lately met with, must have made me very uneasy. One says, Is Mr. Martin in health? Another asks, Is not his congregation much diminished? A third says, Are the Members of his own Church disposed to bear with him any longer?—You know, gentlemen, what answers must be returned to these questions, had your power been equal to your wishes. Is it thus you manifest your regard for toleration, your love of Liberty, and your aversion to Popery?

How you may be honoured in some places for your strange proceedings, I cannot say; but

but I thank God, by the CHURCH at Store-Street, they are properly noticed. Be assured, however, nothing I have met with, shall make me less mindful of the real interest of Dissenters. It is near my heart; and will always be promoted by me to the best of my ability. I may want opportunity to serve them, but my unfeigned concern for their welfare, I will not suffer you to dispute.

Before we part, let me be allowed, by the following quotation, to warn you against being hastily taught by them whom it is your duty to teach. I mean the common people.

“ The PEOPLE take a strange pride, as well as pleasure, in hearing and telling all the faults of their *Governors*; for in doing so, they flatter themselves in thinking they deserve to rule much better than those which do it. And the willingness they have to think so of themselves, makes them misconstrue all the actions of their *Sup' mors* to the worst sense, and then they find out plots in every thing upon the people. Whatever is done for

" for the necessary maintainance of *Government*,
 " is suspected to be a design merely to exhaust
 " the people, to make them more unable to
 " resist. If good *Laws* are made, these are
 " said, by factious men, to be only intended
 " for snares for the *good* people, but *others* may
 " break them and go unpunished. If *Govern-
 ment* is strict and severe, then it is cruel and
 " tyrannical; if mild and indulgent, then it is
 " remiss and negligent. If *Laws* be executed,
 " then the peoples liberties be oppressed; if
 " not, then it were better not to make laws,
 " than not to see them executed. If there be
 " wars, the people are undone by taxes; if
 " there be peace, they are undone by plenty.
 " If extraordinary judgments befall them, then,
 " they lament the sins of their *Governors*, and
 " of the *Times*, and scarce think of their own."
 Stillingfleet's Sermon on Jude, the latter part
 of the 11th. verse.

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In all ages there have been such discontented
 people. At present they every where abound.
 But let us, on no pretence, either stimulate, or
 follow a multitude to do evil.

